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ABSTRACT

The National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) prepared this document to assist educators who wish to strengthen the geography component of pre-service teacher preparation. It includes NCGE standards for the role of geography in pre-service preparation. The paper's recommendations address geography as a pre-service preparation component for (1) all teachers; (2) social studies teachers; (3) teachers with a discipline-specific license within the social studies (e.g. history, geography, economics); (4) elementary and early childhood teachers in self-contained classrooms; and (5) the geography component of social studies methods courses. (Author)

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The Role of Geography in Pre-Service Teacher Preparation:

Geography in the Social Studies

A Position Paper of the National Council for Geographic Education

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St. Paul, Minnesota, October, 1991

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THE ROLE OF GEOGRAPHY IN PRE-SERVICE TEACHER PREPARATION:

GEOGRAPHY IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES[1]

A Position Paper of the National Council for Geographic Education

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ABSTRACT

The National Council for Geographic Education has prepared this document to assist educators who wish to strengthen the geography component of pre-service teacher preparation. It includes NCGE standards for the role of geography in pre-service preparation. Its recommendations address geography as a pre-service preparation component for (1) all teachers, (2) social studies teachers, (3) teachers with a discipline-specific license within the social studies (i.e. history, geography, economics), (4) elementary and early childhood teachers in self-contained classrooms, and (5) the geography component of social studies methods courses.

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR TEACHER PREPARATION IN GEOGRAPHY

The National Council for Geographic Education standards for minimum levels of preparation in geography are based on existing geography curriculum content in the social studies. The standards fall into four categories: 1) geography as a general education requirement for all teachers; 2) geography for social studies teachers, including those with a discipline-specific license (i.e. geography, history, economics); 3) geography for elementary and early childhood teachers in self-contained classrooms; and 4) geography within social studies methods courses.

1. Geography in General Education

All teachers should possess the skills and concepts that enable them to see the earth and its peoples as interrelated and interdependent.

a. *Mapping and Graphing as Basic Communication Skills*

Proficiency in mapping and graphing should be included among those basic communication skills (others: reading, writing, speaking, calculating) that are required of all who would be teachers of any subject, at any level. Skills in mapping and graphing are life skills, used far beyond the confines of a social studies or geography class. For geography, mapping is also an essential content vehicle: only on maps can the spatial distribution of phenomena be accurately portrayed.

b. *Physical Geography or Earth Science*

All students who teach should have as a part of their general education a course that deals with the processes, distribution patterns, and implications for humans of such phenomena as earth/sun relationships, plate tectonics, landforms and drainage patterns, oceans, weather and climate, natural vegetation, and soils. Such a course should identify the geographical dimensions of ecosystems, serve as a foundation for environmental studies, and provide teachers with essential basic knowledge of the earth's physical characteristics.

c. *Human/Environment Relationships: An Introductory Course in Human Geography*

This basic introductory course will stress the importance of human/environment relationships to a global society. A variety of titles and approaches could satisfy this requirement, but the course will have a physical as well as a human dimension. It will focus on the world distribution of natural and human phenomena as they interrelate and give character to places. Within this introductory course, students should be taught to make field observations and record, map, and analyze data that show the varied and complex relationships between humans and their environment. Like all other geography courses, it will develop and employ mapping and graphing skills and address contemporary environmental, global/cross-cultural, and gender issues.

2. Geography in the Preparation of Social Studies Teachers

All who would teach social studies, at any level, should have as firm a foundation in geography as in history, for history and geography are widely acknowledged as the two supporting pillars of the social studies. Understanding the distinct core and methodology of geography requires a separate rather than an interdisciplinary approach, although the relationships between geography, history, and the other social studies are properly a concern of required social studies methods courses. Specific recommendations for geography differ, depending on the type of license sought.

a. *For A Comprehensive 7-12 Social Studies License:*

Persons with a comprehensive license in the social studies will most probably teach those subjects with significant state mandates: United States and world history, global studies, economics, and government. It is imperative that teachers of these subjects understand geography. The following program of preparation in geography is recommended:

General Studies in Geography

- *Physical Geography or Earth Science*
- *Human/Environment Interaction: An Introductory Human Geography Course*

Specialized Studies in Geography

- *World Regional Geography*
- *One other regional or topical geography course*

b. *For Licensure By Discipline*

The NCGE strongly endorses the NCSS position that states:

> *"Institutions that allow, encourage, or require preparation for licensure by discipline (for example, history, geography, economics) should require a program of studies in that discipline that is no less demanding than what is required of a B.A. or B.S. degree major in that discipline at that institution."*

The NCGE recommends that discipline-specific standards be developed by each teacher-training institution. The following is suggested for Geography:

1) Standards for Licensure in Geography:

A major in geography leading to licensure should include a balanced program of studies in physical and human geography, topical and regional courses, mapping and other geographic techniques, and geographic thought. We strongly suggest that the geography major who will teach in middle or secondary schools have significant course work beyond the introductory or survey courses in history and other social sciences.

2) Geography Components of Other Discipline-Specific Licensure

For licensure in history and other social science disciplines, teacher candidates should have a strong background in geography, and preferably a minor concentration. The following minimal preparation standards in geography are recommended:

a) *History*

General Studies in Geography

- *Physical Geography or Earth Science*
- *Human/Environment Interaction: An Introductory Human*
- *One other regional or topical geography course*

Specialized Studies in Geography

- *World Regional Geography*
- *Geography of North America*
- *One other regional or topical geography course*

b) *Other Social Sciences (anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, sociology)*

General Studies in Geography

- *Physical Geography or Earth Science*
- *Human/Environment Interaction: An Introductory Human Geography course*

Specialized Studies in Geography

- *World Regional Geography*
- *One or more additional geography courses appropriate to the discipline (i.e., economic geography, urban geography, population geography, political geography)*

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2. Geography in the Preparation of Social Studies Teachers, Continued

c. *For Middle School or Departmentalized Elementary School Licensure:*

Because of the primary importance of both geography and history in the social studies curriculum of grades 5-8 (or 9, in a junior high school setting), preparation of social studies teachers for pupils in this age group should be strong in both United States studies and global studies, with emphasis on history and geography. A middle school licensure in the social studies should include no less preparation than that required for a secondary license. Preparation in geography should include the following as a minimum:

General Studies in Geography

- *Physical Geography or Earth Science*
- *Human/Environment Interaction: An Introductory Human Geography course*

Specialized Studies in Geography

- *World Regional Geography*
- *Geography of North America*
- *One other regional or topical geography course*

3. Geography for Teachers of Young Children, in Self-Contained Classrooms

In the early elementary and pre-school years, geography has a special function. Where the early elementary curriculum is based on the expanding-environments concept, children proceed outward from an examination of their immediate environment, their home and school, to awareness of the wider world of which they are a part. Geography is at the core of this concept. In the California curriculum and that of other states where needed knowledge of the wider world is integrated with children's knowledge of their immediate environment, geography is again central to understanding. Teachers in self-contained classrooms, where disciplines can be most readily integrated, have an opportunity to relate geography to all learning.

a. *For Elementary Licensure, Self-contained Classroom*

The early elementary years are a critical time in the development of spatial awareness in the young. Childrens life-long enthusiasms for maps and globes, for understanding the land around them, and for curiosity about other places and other peoples can be traced to their introduction to geography in the primary grades. Teachers need not be experts in geography, but they need to be comfortable with its basic concepts, so that they can integrate geography into social studies, science, language arts, music, and all other areas of the elementary curriculum. The following minimum preparation in geography is recommended:

General Studies in Geography

- *Physical Geography or Earth Science*
- *Human/Environment Interaction: An Introductory Human Geography Course*

Specialized Studies in Geography

- *World Regional Geography*
- *State and Local History and Geography (an interdisciplinary course or two separate courses)*

b. *For Kindergarten And Early Childhood Licensure*

Teachers of very young children have a special opportunity to introduce geographic skills and understandings at an early age. This can happen only if the teacher has systematic academic preparation in, and is comfortable with, basic understandings in geography. Minimum preparation should include the following:

General Studies in Geography

- *Physical Geography or Earth Science*
- *Human/Environment Interaction: An Introductory Human Geography Course*

4. Geography in Instructional Methods Courses

Instructional methods courses are essential, but they should not be substitutes for discipline-specific courses in fulfilling requirements for licensure. In some cases a specific instructional methods course in geography is offered, and the entire course content is devoted to classroom methods for teaching geography. More common, however, are courses offering instructional methods in social studies. A course in social studies methods should demonstrate how the geographic viewpoint expresses itself in history and the other social sciences. It should prepare teachers to integrate geography in ways appropriate to the grade levels and subjects they will teach. For all levels it should emphasize the application of geographic skills and techniques — including maps, globes, charts, graphs, and recorded field observations and analysis — in the social studies classroom.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

THE GEOGRAPHY GAP IN TEACHER PREPARATION

Students now enrolled in teacher preparation programs are not receiving adequate instruction to carry out the increased emphasis on geography in the nation's schools. A recent assessment by the Council of Chief State School Officers found that only five of the states require geography for certification of elementary teachers K-5, and only two-thirds require that persons intending to teach social studies have even a single course in geography. Although geography is widely taught as part of history courses, only six of the states presently require geography for certification in the teaching of history.[2] Further, a recent survey in one state of 30 institutions with teacher preparation programs found that 51 percent of the state's candidates for elementary certification, and 88 percent of those seeking social studies licensure, graduate from programs where geography is not required.[3]

Certification requirements change slowly, as indicated in the following passage from Geography and the States: A Report on the 1988 Survey of Commissioners and Superintendents of Education:

> *"The system is intentionally conservative, and meant to keep certification requirements from changing as a result of public caprice. Rather, changes come to the list of requirements only when it can be proven they will improve the calibre of classroom instruction, or meet an acknowledged need in the system. Anyone who seeks to change certification requirements must be prepared to marshal a conclusive argument substantiated by overwhelming documentation."*[4]

Conclusive arguments notwithstanding, the NCGE is pessimistic that the geography gap in teacher education will be plugged by rapid or timely changes in certification requirements at the state level. Pragmatically, we must assume that at least for the short term, teacher candidates who emerge well-prepared in geography will reflect not state certification standards but the graduation requirements set by individual preparation programs and the guidance of educators aware of the growing role of geography in the nation's schools.

GEOGRAPHY IN THE SCHOOLS: AN INCREASING PRESENCE

We can expect that the place of geography within the curriculum will be increasingly strong as the present decade progresses. A poll of leading state school officers indicates that almost all expect to see an increased emphasis on geography in their states.[5]

Momentum for geography in education has been building ever since the 1984 joint publication by the National Council for Geographic Education and the Association of American Geographers of Guidelines for Geographic Education, which introduced the now widely-accepted Five Themes as a framework for teaching and learning geography.[6] Subsequently, the founding of the Geography Education National Implementation Project (GENIP), and the publication by GENIP of specific suggestions for implementing the Five Themes in K-6 and 7-12 classrooms, fostered widespread dissemination of the Five Themes among educators.[7] Assessments such as the 1988 Gallup Poll (which compared the geographic knowledge of Americans with that of citizens of eight other countries) have called attention to glaring deficiencies in Americans' knowledge of geography, particularly among young adults.[8]

The National Geographic Society (NGS) has given impetus to geography in the schools through the nation-wide Geography Alliance Program (offering in-service and summer institute opportunities to teachers); the local, state, and national Geography Bee contests for students in grades 4-8; and the sponsorship of an annual Geography Awareness Week, with nationwide dissemination of teaching materials. In addition, a number of corporations have sponsored education programs and competitions that have increased the visibility of geography.

Competency in geography is one of the goals of AMERICA 2000, the joint federal-state program referred to at the beginning of this document:

> *"Working closely with the governors, we will define new World Class Standards for schools, teachers, and students in the five core subjects: math and science, English, history and geography..."*. President George Bush.[9]

A national consensus is evolving on grade-by-grade geography content objectives, and in 1994 the National Assessment for Educational Progress will assess, for the first time, students' knowledge of geography in grades four, eight, and twelve. Results of the 1994 geography assessment, based on national content consensus, are expected to provide a baseline for periodic voluntary national assessment in these grades.[10]

Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander recently echoed the preface from the Guidelines for Geographic Education when he indicated the imperatives for strengthening the training of teachers in geography:

> *"If we are going to compete in a global marketplace, a geographically literate work force is more critical than ever before. Geography's focus on the physical, cultural, and economic characteristics of other peoples and places offers insights into the international arena. We simply need to know far more about other peoples and places than we now know."*

Secretary Alexander went on to address professional geographers:

> *"College or university geographers can initiate new working relationships with colleagues who are preparing our future teachers, to help strengthen the content and relevance of the geography being offered in education courses."*[11]

GEOGRAPHY IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

Geography is found throughout the social studies curriculum. It appears both as independent courses and as a subject integrated with other social studies. Elementary and middle school teachers treat geography within the block of time devoted to the social studies. One recent study found that in elementary and middle school social studies programs, geography occupies more time than any of the other social sciences, followed closely by history.[12] From the eighth grade through high school, geography as an integrated subject is most often taught within history courses, although it also appears in courses dealing with political science and international relations. At present, economics courses devote surprisingly little time to geography, despite the importance of geographical concepts in raw materials acquisition, industrial location, product distribution and international trade.[13]

Geography as a separate course, with content recognized as "geography" rather than "social studies," is generally offered in the middle school, junior high, or early high school years (grades 6-10), where it appears in various guises, sometimes as "Eastern Hemisphere" or "Western Hemisphere," sometimes as "World Geography," sometimes as "World Cultures," and sometimes simply as "Geography." Almost two thirds of a sample group of 3,000 high school seniors in some 300 public and private high schools reported in 1988 that they had taken a geography course sometime between grades 9 and 12. Thirty percent, the largest segment, reported taking World Geography in grade 9.[14] At least ten states currently require geography for graduation from high school.[15]

THE CONTENT OF GEOGRAPHY

The widely-accepted Five Themes of Geography — Location, Place, Human/Environment Interaction, Movement, and Region — outline a logical framework for teaching and learning geography that incorporates the basic concepts of the discipline. The Five Themes now appear in most elementary and middle school social studies textbooks, and junior high and high school geography and history texts. They are widely used by curriculum writers. They have been adopted by the National Geographic Society Alliance program and form the basis for most of the country's in-service geography workshops and institutes.

The Five Themes of Geography are broadly applicable: they help students to discern spatial patterns and understand relationships within their local environment, but they also help them to view the earth as a whole, to see how distribution patterns reflect a combination of human and natural factors, to understand how these factors interact to produce a constantly changing environment, to understand how the dynamics of movement — the spread of people, goods, and ideas — subjects all places to change, and to discern the likenesses and differences that set areas apart as regions. The structure of the Five Themes is a teaching and learning tool at every level, from pre-school through college.[16]

The Five Themes are equally effective whether geography concepts are integrated within other social science disciplines or are taught in separate geography courses. Teacher education programs in geography in the 1990s need not center around the Five Themes, nor need they be organized using their framework. But they cannot afford to ignore the Five Themes.

Implicit and explicit in the powerful analytical approach of the Five Themes are the tools and skills — maps, globes, charts, graphs, photographs, and field observation and analysis — that are important content features of geography. Leading school officers in most states agree that skill in using the tools of geography must be introduced early and applied with increasing sophistication, systematically reinforced, year after year.[17] Thus, the pre-service preparation of those who will teach geography must incorporate such essential content as maps and globes, charts, graphs and photographs, and field experience, as well as factual subject matter.

Specific content considerations for geography at each grade level vary from state to state. Three documents will assist the certification specialist in this regard:

1) Guidelines for Geographic Education, referred to earlier, presents a sequence of geographic concepts and suggested learning outcomes at K-2, 3-4, 5-6, and 7-12 levels[18]. Essential supplements to the Guidelines are K-6 Geography and 7-12 Geography.

2) Geography and the States: A Report on the 1988 Survey of Commissioners and Superintendents of Education, documents replies of 80 percent of the nation's chief state school officers to specific questions concerning the role of geography in their jurisdiction;[19]

3) The forthcoming (1992) report of the National Association of Educational Progress Consensus Project, undertaken by the National Council for Geographic Education, working with the Council of Chief State School Officers.[20]

-NOTES-

1. Elements of geography appear in both the social studies and the science strands of the curriculum, but the present NCGE recommendations deal solely with preparation for geography as taught within the social studies. Recommendations for geography within science education are now being drawn up and will follow in a separate position paper. This position paper is an outgrowth of geography-in-certification studies initiated in 1985 by the Geographic National Implementation Project (see Dennis Spetz, "The Preparation of Geography Teachers," Chapter 5 in Strengthening Geography in the Social Studies: NCSS Bulletin No. 81. Salvatore J. Natoli, Editor, [Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1988], 51-58) and subsequently carried forward by a committee of the National Council for Geographic Education. NCGE Certification Committee members included Bruce Bechtol, California State University, Chico; Dorothy Drummond, Indiana State University; Michael Libbee, Central Michigan University; Ruth Shirey, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; Dennis Spetz, University of Louisville, and Nancy Winter, Clark University.

In 1990, the NCGE submitted its recommendations for teacher certification standards in geography to the National Council for the Social Studies, as requested by the NCSS Committee for Revision of Standards for the Preparation of Social Studies Teachers. The NCSS Standards are currently in process of revision. NCSS Standards form the basis for social studies accreditation standards adopted by the National Council for Accreditation of Teachers Education (NCATE). The NCSS represents the various social science disciplines on the board of NCATE. This Position Paper indicates in full the NCGE recommendations.

2. Duncan MacDonald and Fred Czarra, Geography and the States: Report on the 1988 Survey of Commissioners and Superintendents of Education (Washington D.C.: Council of Chief State School Officers, 1988), 32.

3. D. W. Drummond, The Geography Gap in Teacher Training in Indiana. Paper read before the Indiana Academy of Social Science, October, 1985. Available as an ERIC document, 1990.

4. MacDonald and Czarra, 17.

5. Eighty-four percent of state commissioners and superintendents of education report that in the next five years geography will play a greater role in their curriculum than it has in the past, as cited by Duncan MacDonald and Fred Czarra, 31.

6. Joint Committee on Geographic Education of the National Council for Geographic Education and the Association of American Geographers, Guidelines for Geographic Education: Elementary and Secondary Schools (Washington, D.C. and Macomb, Illinois: Association of American Geographers and National Council for Geographic Education, 1984). This publication can be obtained from the National Council for Geographic Education, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705-1087 or the Association of American Geographers, 1710 Sixteenth Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20009. The Five Themes of Geography, and their relevance to teacher education, are discussed on page 6 of the present document.

7. The Geography Education National Implementation Project joins representatives from the four national professional geographical organizations — the National Council for Geographic Education, the Association of American Geographers, the National Geographic Society, and the American Geographical Society — in efforts to increase geography in education. GENIP has published K-6 Geography: Themes, Key Ideas, and Learning Opportunities (1987) and Geography in Grades 7-12: Themes, Key Ideas, and Learning Opportunities (1989). These publications are available from the National Council for Geographic Education.

8. Gallup Organization, Geography: An International Gallup Survey (Princeton, N.J.: The Gallup Organization, 1988).

9. Remarks by the President at the Presentation of the National Education Strategy in America 2000: An Education Strategy Sourcebook (Washington D.C.: United States Department of Education), April, 1991), 1. This document sets forth intended methods for carrying out this objective: "Through the National Education Goals Panel, and working with interested parties throughout the nation, the president and the governors will develop a timetable for establishing national standards in these five subjects...[and]...a system of voluntary examinations will be developed and made available for all fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade students in the five core subjects," White House Fact Sheet, April 18, 1991, Ibid., 47.

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10. Susan Munroe, "Assessing Geographic Knowledge," Update (Washington D.C. National Geographic Society Geography Education Program, Fall, 1991), 6.

11. Lamar Alexander, "New Strides for Geography in Education," Update (Washington D.C. National Geographic Society Geography Education Program, Fall, 1991), 2.

12. Wayne L. Herman, Jr. "Development in Scope and Sequence: A Survey of School Districts," Social Education, 52, No.5 (September, 1988): 385-388.

13. MacDonald and Czarra, 8. In this survey, Superintendents and Commissioners of Education in the various states generally felt that geography as a separate course is best taught in either the junior high/middle school or elementary school classroom, and that geography skills should be mastered in the earlier years, then practiced in various high school social studies courses. The survey was taken before the probability of future national testing in geography, to be administered at the 12th as well as the 8th and 4th grades, became apparent.

14. Russell Allen et al, The Geography Learning of High School Seniors (Princeton, N.J.: The National Assessment of Education Progress, Princeton, 1990), 48, 51.

15. MacDonald and Czarra, 25.

16. Specific suggestions for implementing the Five Themes are contained in two publications of the Geographic Education National Implementation Project (GENIP): K-6 Geography: Themes, Key Ideas and Learning Opportunities (1987) and Geography in Grades 7-12: Themes, Key Ideas, and Learning Opportunities (1989). These publications are distributed by the National Council for Geographic Education.

17. MacDonald and Czarra, 9.

18. See Note Number 6, above.

19. MacDonald and Czarra, Geography and the States

20. National Council for Geographic Education and Council of Chief State School Officers, forthcoming report, 1992. This report will detail consensus on grade-by-grade geography content objectives and will emphasize the kinds of knowledge students would be expected to demonstrate in a scheduled 1994 NAEP national geography assessment in grades 4, 8, and 12.

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